

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CA, TD

SUBJ: TRUDEAU VISIT STIRS A TEMPEST

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SUMMARY: CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU'S VISIT TO TRINIDAD, WHICH HAD APPEARED TO BE A BRIEF, NON-CONTROVERSIAL, NON-SUBSTANTIVE VISIT, HAS NOW CREATED A SMALL POLITICAL TEMPEST OVER PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS' TREATMENT OF HIS CANADIAN GUEST. END SUMMARY.

1. CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER PIERRE TRUDEAU PAID A 24-HOUR VISIT TO TRINIDAD APRIL 24-25 ON HIS SWING THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN PRIOR TO ATTENDING THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE IN JAMAICA. LARGELY CONFINED TO CEREMONIAL EVENTS AND ATMOSPHERIC DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS AND OTHER T&T LEADERS, THE VISIT APPEARED, AT THE TIME, TO BE AN EVENTFUL BUT SUCCESSFUL EXERCISE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS WHICH RECEIVED COPIOUS AND COMPLEMENTARY COVERAGE IN THE TRINIDAD PRESS. AFTER TRUDEAU'S DEPARTURE, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, A CONTROVERSY ERUPTED OVER DR. WILLIAMS' TREATMENT

OF HIS CANADIAN GUEST.

2. THE CONTROVERSY BEGAN WHEN THE TRINIDAD EXPRESS ON APRIL 28 GAVE FIRST PAGE COVERAGE TO REPORTS PRINTED IN CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS THAT DR. WILLIAMS HAD SNUBBED TRUDEAU BY NOT MEETING HIM AT THE AIRPORT AND BY ARRIVING A HALF HOUR LATE TO A DINNER GIVEN IN TRUDEAU'S HONOR BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. THE EXPRESS AGAIN TOOK DR. WILLIAMS TO TASK THE FOLLOWING DAY IN AN EDITORIAL WHICH CRITICIZED THE PRIME MINISTER'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARD A GUEST AND SAID "....THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ABILITY TO RELATE WITH HIS COLLEAGUES ELSEWHERE LEAVE SO MUCH TO BE DESIRED...." FOR A FEW DAYS IT SEEMED THAT THIS TEMPEST WOULD SUBSIDE. DR. WILLIAMS, HOWEVER, RESPONDED TO THE CHARGES AT A MAY 4 MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF HIS PARTY, THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL MOVEMENT, AND THE CONTROVERSY WAS ONCE AGAIN ON THE FRONT PAGES.

3. IN HIS STATEMENT, DR. WILLIAMS SAID THAT HIS ACTIONS DURING THE TRUDEAU VISIT WERE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED PROTOCOL AND WITH HIS USUAL PRACTICE IN SUCH CASES. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, HE SAID, WERE NOT BAD BEFORE THE VISIT AND WOULD NOT BE WORSE AFTER IT. AS TO WHAT ACTUALLY WAS DISCUSSED BY THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS DURING THE VISIT, DR. WILLIAMS SAID THAT HE DISAPPROVED OF "DISCUSSIONS WITH NON-CARIBBEAN AGENCIES AS TO WHAT WE IN THE CARIBBEAN SHOULD DO "AND THEREFORE HE HAD REJECTED A LIST OF DISCUSSION TOPICS PROPOSED BY THE CANADIANS WHICH INCLUDED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN, CHANGING ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CANADA AND THE CARIBBEAN, AND CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICIES. ALTHOUGH THE NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT THESE TOPICS WERE DISCUSSED, NONE WAS RAISED BY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO." (ACCORDING TO OFFICERS IN THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION, THE TWO MEN TALKED ABOUT VERY LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE AND A LOT ABOUT THE WEATHER.) DR. WILLIAMS WENT ON TO SAY "THEY (THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT) PURSUE THEIR INTEREST, WHETHER ON IMMIGRATION OR AID TO BWIA, IN RESPECT OF WHICH I WAS ALMOST LITERALLY THROWN OUT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (A REFERENCE TO AN EARLIER WILLIAMS VISIT TO CANADA WHEN CONFIDENTIAL

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PEARSON WAS PRIME MINISTER). WE PURSUE OUR INTERESTS. THE SIMPLE FACT IS THAT CANADA, WHOSE FIRST REAL ECONOMIC PROGRESS WAS STIMULATED BY ITS WEST INDIAN CONNECTIONS, HAS OUTGROWN THE WEST INDIES, AS IS TRUE OF THE U.K., U.S.A. AND MANY OTHER COUNTRIES. EVERYONE KNOWS THIS EXCEPT THE WEST INDIES. CANADA AT THIS MOMENT IS BUSY TRYING TO SELL NUCLEAR REACTORS TO VENEZUELA WHILST WE ARE REPEATING THE COMPLAINT OVER GOD KNOWS HOW MANY DECADES

RELATING TO THE SALE OF RUM IN CANADA."

4. THE PRIME MINISTER WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE GOTT HIGH COMMISSIONER IN CANADA HAD EARLIER ALSO SENT SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION WITH TRUDEAU AND THAT HE (WILLIAMS) HAD INFORMED HIS HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT HE WAS "NOT THE LEAST IMPRESSED BY YOUR PROPOSALS, YOUR GENERAL IDEAS AND YOUR SPECIFIC POINTS. PRIME MINISTER STRONGLY SUGGESTS YOU TAKE NO FURTHER STEPS UNTIL YOU HAVE SOME SPECIFIC DIRECTIVE." NO DIRECTIVE WAS EVER SENT, SO IT MAY NOT BE SURPRISING IF GOTT AMBASSADORS AND HIGH COMMISSIONERS ABROAD TAKE LITTLE INITIATIVE. APPARENTLY THE PM WANTS IT THAT WAY. THE ENTIRE MAY 4 STATEMENT IS A REMARKABLE DOCUMENT IN THE ANNALS OF DIPLOMACY AND IS BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPT. ENTIRE.
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5. COMMENT: THIS EPISODE ILLUSTRATES: 1) A RELATIVELY LOW PRIORITY ASSIGNED RELATIONS WITH CANADA; 2) THE TYPICAL ERIC WILLIAMS DISINCLINATION TO DISCUSS ISSUES OR CONDUCT THE USUAL "TOUR D'HORIZON" WITH FOREIGN OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATS; AND 3) THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF REMARKABLY CANDID AND OUTSPOKEN WILLIAMS, CRITICISMS OF FOREIGN NATIONS AND LEADERS. TWO YEARS AGO, THE US WAS THE INEVITABLE BUTT OF THE TENDENCY AND IT IS INDEED REMARKABLE IN A PERIOD WHICH HAS SEEN ERIC WILLIAMS RATHER DIRECTLY INSULT SUCH FRIENDS AS VENEZUELA, JAMAICA, AND CANADA, THAT THE US HAS BEEN SPARED. UNDOUBTEDLY THE GRACIOUS RECEPTION OF DR. WILLIAMS BY PRESIDENT FORD EARLIER THIS YEAR HELPED SIGNIFICANTLY.

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6. ALSO ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE OCCASIONAL FREEZE WHICH DR. WILLIAMS PLACES DIPLMATS IN HERE IF HE IS DISPLEASED EITHER WITH THEM OR THEIR COUNTRIES, IS THAT THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER, WHO HAS BEEN HERE FOR SEVEN MONTHS, HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE TO MEET OR SHAKE WILLIAMS' HAND PRIOR TO TRUDEAU'S VISIT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WILLIAMS ALSO HOLDS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PORTFOLIO.
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